

PBS Lesson Series

ELA, Grade 2, Lesson 19

Teacher Packet

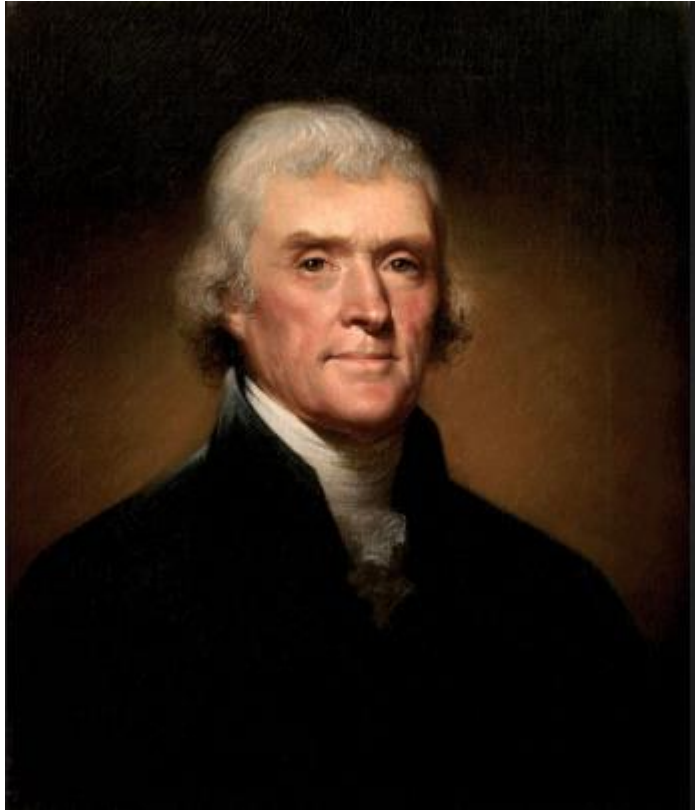
The Continental Congress wanted the Declaration to accomplish four main tasks. The first task was to state why America should break its relationship with Britain. Another task was to develop a document to show Americans and other countries. The next task was to help join Americans against Britain. The last task was the colonies wanted other countries to treat America like its own country.

As Jefferson wrote the Declaration, he wrote it in sections for a purpose. The first section told the purpose of the document. The second part told the rights all people should have. The third part showed why the colonies were upset with Britain, ways they were treated unfairly, and described ways they tried to work with the king. The fourth part said the colonies should be treated like any other country.

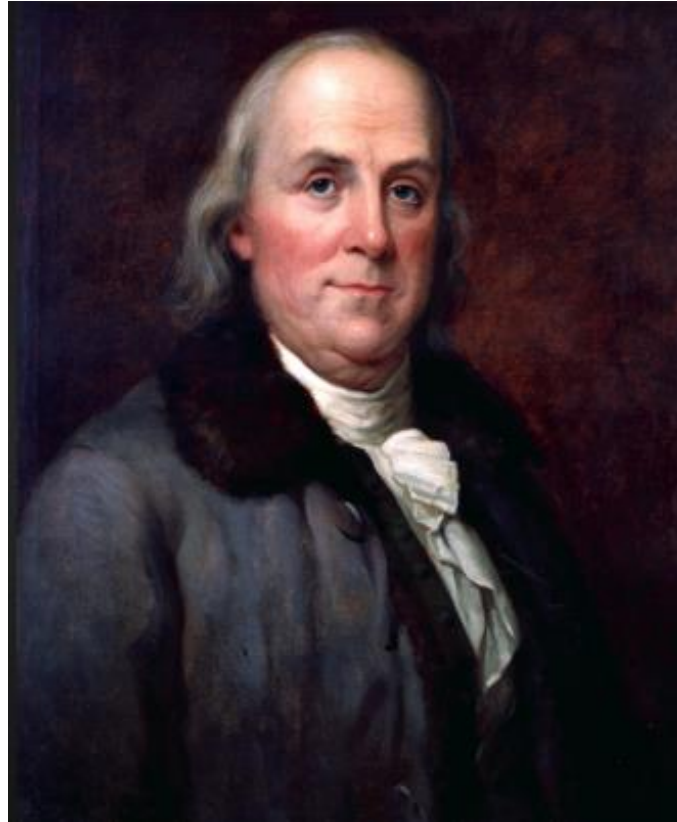
Signing the Declaration

On July 4, 1776, the final version of the Declaration of Independence was complete. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Ben Franklin, and the other delegates had created a new nation.

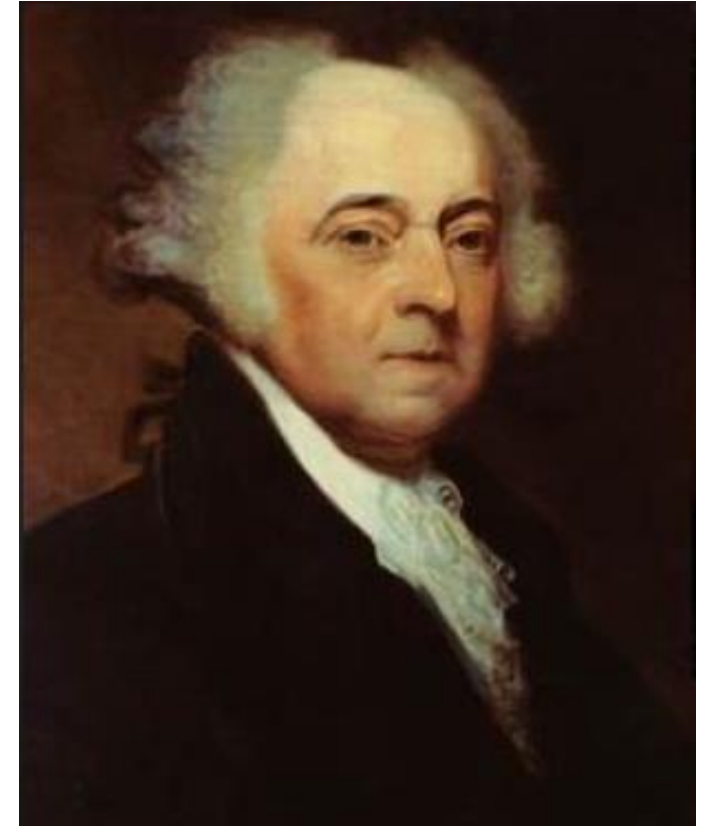
Thomas
Jefferson



Benjamin
Franklin



John
Adams



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Draft (*v*): to write a document

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The Declaration of Independence

and the First Fourth of July

By Michael A. Signal

Three men worked late into the night. They read and reread,



Did you know that during the American Revolution the American flag had only 13 stars to represent the 13 colonies?

the men continued.

Finally, the document was ready for the colonies' representatives to read and approve. By the afternoon of July 4th, 1776, they had done just that. The thirteen British colonies had

making final changes to the document. It had to be perfect before all thirteen colonies would approve it. Thomas Jefferson had written most of the text, but John Adams and Benjamin Franklin reviewed the declaration to help make changes. They had been working for days. The candles lighting the room flickered and grew short. The summer air was hot and uncomfortable, but still

decided not to be British anymore. They had declared their independence. America was born.

The British had been at war with the thirteen American colonies for over a year before the colonies declared their independence, or freedom. The Battle of Lexington marked the start of the American Revolution on April 19, 1775. The colonies had fought many battles against the British army since then, and the colonists knew that they didn't want to be ruled by the king of Britain anymore. But it still took fifteen months for the colonies to declare their independence.

The Continental Congress

Not long before, the colonies had established a Continental Congress. The Continental Congress was made up of delegates from each of the thirteen colonies and served as the government. For years, the colonies had been displeased with the way the British had forced them to follow laws they didn't approve. One of the most important issues to the colonies was something called "taxation without representation." The British government taxed many

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The Continental Congress that adopted the Declaration of Independence was actually the Second Continental Congress. The First Continental Congress met in 1774. It was the first time the delegates from almost all the colonies met to make decisions for America. Georgia was the only colony that did not participate in the First Continental Congress.

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In 1775, the Continental Congress sent a petition to the British King. It listed the ways that the colonies thought Britain had treated them unfairly. The Continental Congress hoped that the King and the colonies could reach an agreement and that would make both sides happy. But the king ignored the petition.

Writing the Declaration

After this, the colonies were sure that the only way forward was to gain their independence from Britain. The Continental Congress selected five men to draft a document declaring America's freedom. The men all agreed that Thomas Jefferson, who had been a lawyer in Virginia, should be the main writer of the Declaration of Independence.

Jefferson worked on the Declaration of Independence for weeks. The Continental Congress wanted the declaration to state exactly why America should break its ties with Britain. They wanted a document they could show to the American people and even to people in other countries. The Congress wanted the declaration to help Americans join together against Britain. They also wanted other countries to recognize the colonies' freedom and treat America like its own



This engraving from 1861 shows the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

country, not like part of Britain.

Parts of the Declaration of Independence

Thomas Jefferson felt just as strongly about independence as the rest of The Continental Congress. He toiled day and night to get every word just right. He ended up writing the Declaration of Independence in four parts. The first part is called the Preamble. He wrote it as an introduction to explain the purpose of the declaration. Jefferson used the next part to list the rights that all people should have. In this part, Jefferson explained that if the government tried to take these rights away from the people, the people should change the government. Jefferson wrote the third part of the declaration to show exactly why the colonies were upset with Britain. He listed many of the ways that Britain had treated the colonies unfairly. He also described how the colonies tried to work with the King of Britain to settle the problems. Lastly, in the final section, Jefferson wrote that that the colonies should now be treated just like any other independent country.

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Independent Practice

How do the introduction and conclusion help the reader understand the author's purpose in writing this article?

Morphology chart

Prefixes	Suffixes	Roots
re- again	-er person who	clar clear
dis- not, or opposite of		
de- separation, away from, or intensity		
un not, or opposite of		